



Chemical restraint

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What is chemical restraint?

Chemical restraint is defined as the use of medication or chemical substance for the primary purpose of influencing a person's behaviour. It does not include the use of medication prescribed by a medical practitioner to treat, or to enable treatment, of a diagnosed mental health condition, physical illness or physical condition. The prescribing medical practitioner is the clinical decision-maker who determines the purpose of a medication.

It is intended that chemical restraints are prescribed to reduce the risk of harm to the person or others, where they are less harmful than the behaviour of concern. Timely and regular reviews are recommended to protect the rights of the persons.

Determining if a medication is a chemical restraint

Implementing Providers and/or Behaviour Support Practitioners need confirmation of the purpose of medication use from the medical practitioner, including clarification of the conditions for administering a medication. If there is uncertainty about whether a medication is prescribed to address an underlying condition, or for behaviour support needs, then it needs to be interpreted and reported as a chemical restraint. Asking the treating medical practitioner to complete a Purpose of Medication Clarification Form can assist the Behaviour Support Practitioner and Implementing Providers determine whether use of a medication should be defined as a chemical restraint under the Policy.

If an Implementing Provider is delivering a service when a medication (considered a chemical restraint) is either self-administered or administered by the provider, then that provider must seek authorisation.

If an Implementing Provider is not delivering a service when the person has been administered or has self-administered a medication (considered a chemical restraint), but delivers a service while the person may be under the influence of the medication, the provider should be aware of protocols for the use of the medication, (for example, monitoring for side effects) and implementing positive behaviour support strategies to support the person's needs.



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Policy requirements for chemical restraint

The Authorisation of Restrictive Practices in Funded Disability Services Policy requires that all restrictive practices must be captured in a Behaviour Support Plan (BSP). Information that needs to be captured in the BSP in relation to chemical restraint includes:

- the prescribing doctor's contact details
- the medication name (brand and chemical names)
- the medication dosage and administration instructions including:
 - the dose amount and frequency of administration
 - how the medication should be taken
 - known or anticipated substance effects and side effects of the medication
- the conditions or limits around the use of the medication (i.e. maximum dose per day; how the medication is stored; etc)
the circumstances in which the chemical restraint is to be used, including information about what may trigger use of the medication, the reason for the medication.

Reduction and elimination of chemical restraint

It is recommended that implementing providers, behaviour support practitioners and treating medical practitioners identify and share information and data that can be used to guide safe reduction and elimination of chemical restraint use over time. This information can be used to inform a specific reduction and elimination plan required to be completed by the behaviour support practitioner when developing the BSP. Regular review of this information with the treating medical practitioner is also critical to support reduction and elimination over time.

Contact information

For more information, please contact the Department of Communities Behaviour Support Consultancy Team:

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